

JUSTIFICATION FOR OTHER THAN FULL AND OPEN COMPETITION

1. Contracting Activity: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Office of Acquisition Operations
Technology Acquisition Center
23 Christopher Way
Eatontown, NJ 07724
2. Description of Action: The proposed sole source action is for a Firm-Fixed Price contract to Elsevier B.V, Engineering Information, Radarweg 29, Amsterdam, North Holland, 1043 NX for the renewal of the commercial Elsevier Fingerprint Engine Enterprise License, maintenance and technical support.
3. Description of Supplies or Services: The proposed action is to renew VA's enterprise license for the customized Elsevier Fingerprint Engine and to obtain maintenance and technical support under same. The enterprise license was originally procured on June 29, 2011. The Elsevier Fingerprint Engine Enterprise License is part of the Portfolio Categorization and Reporting Tool (PCRT). The PCRT is a set of solution modules integrated and configured as one system to help with critical functions of VA's Office of Research and Development (ORD), including categorizing and reporting VA research, and to provide information to help the merit review process by checking conflicts of interest and researching duplicative projects. The renewal of the customized Elsevier Fingerprint Engine Enterprise License, which is for VA internal use, will allow the VA ORD to utilize the Elsevier Fingerprint Engine for all the portfolio categorization and reporting tool modules and other VA internal applications. In addition, the Elsevier Fingerprint Engine Enterprise License will provide an automated portfolio classification capability for all ORD research projects; provide an analytic capability to evaluate the research program for areas of strength, influence, trends, gaps, and new opportunities; provide functionality for the identification of internal and external reviewers and reviewer comparison against incoming proposals; and provide internal and external reporting tools. The period of performance for this proposed effort is 12 months, plus two, 12-month option periods to renew the license and for continued maintenance and technical support. The total estimated value of the proposed action is \$ [REDACTED], inclusive of all options.
4. Statutory Authority: The statutory authority permitting other than full and open competition is 41 U.S.C.3304(a)(1) as implemented by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 6.302-1(a)(2) entitled, "Only One Responsible Source and No Other Supplies or Services Will Satisfy Agency Requirements."
5. Rationale Supporting Use of Authority Cited Above: The proposed source for this action is Elsevier B.V, Engineering Information, Radarweg 29, Amsterdam, North Holland, 1043 NX. Based on extensive market research as described in section 8 of this justification, it is determined that only the renewal of an enterprise software license of the Elsevier Fingerprint Engine tool, maintenance and technical support is capable of meeting all of the Government's requirements. VA research programs

must remain compliant with the uniform federal-wide reporting standard and strategy for Government-funded research. The baseline standard for this reporting strategy is the National Institute of Health (NIH) Research, Condition, and Disease Categorization (RCDC) library of categories for applicable research projects. No other brand name software other than the the Elsevier Fingerprint Engine Enterprise license can meet all of VA's functional requirements. Specifically, only the Elsevier Fingerprint Engine Enterprise license will allow VA ORD to categorize all projects in its research project portfolio using the NIH RCDC category definitions and effectively compare VA and NIH research portfolios. The categorization of all projects in a research portfolio using the NIH RCDC to categorize definitions and compare VA and NIH research portfolios is a VA functional requirement. In addition, only the Elsevier Fingerprint Engine Enterprise license can perform semantic matching to the PCRT, which is an Elsevier-exclusive scientific thesauri called Compendex, which is a VA mandatory functional requirement. Furthermore, VA requires that the PCRT provide five distinct functions: provide an automated portfolio classification capability for all ORD-funded research projects; provide an analytic capability to evaluate the ORD research program for areas of strength, influence, trends, gaps, and new opportunities; provide functionality for the identification of internal and external peer reviewers and reviewer comparison against incoming proposals; provide public web-based search tools; and provide individual provider web-based profiles including bio sketch, publications, active areas of investigation. These five distinct functions are VA functional requirements that can only be met through use of the Elsevier Fingerprint Engine Enterprise license on the PCRT. Finally, only the Elsevier Fingerprint Engine Enterprise license can provide abstract and metadata. Scopus is how the Elsevier Fingerprint Engine Enterprise license works. Scopus abstract and other metadata is utilized to accurately map Principal Investigators and publications to grants and to perform matching in the Reviewer Finder module of PCRT. The Scopus database is owned and maintained by Elsevier. Scopus maintains scientific publication data on VA and NIH research scientists. Market research confirmed that Elsevier is the only source whose Fingerprint engine and analysis and reporting modules is currently interconnected with the NIH system. VA would lose the above-listed functional capabilities were the Elsevier Fingerprint Engine Enterprise license not renewed. Further, the Fingerprint Engine tool's related maintenance and technical support is required in order to provide updates and keep the tool operational. Any source other than Elsevier would be required to obtain access to Elsevier's proprietary technical data to provide these services. Specifically, this technical data is required to ensure that any services performed on the the Elsevier are properly configured. Failure to renew the current Elsevier license would render the PCRT inoperable not in compliance NIH standards and lose access to Scopus resulting in having to replace the currently fielded PCRT. To replace the PCRT would require completely new development of an alternate application which would result in a duplicated cost of \$2.3 million and approximately 2-3 years to complete. This estimate is based on VA's cost in replacing the current PCRT.

6. Efforts to Obtain Competition: Market research was conducted, details of which are in the market research document and below. This effort did not yield any additional sources that can meet the Government's requirements. There is no competition anticipated for this acquisition due to the proprietary nature of the Fingerprint Engine tool. Additionally, the proposed action will be synopsized on the Federal Business Opportunities Page in accordance with FAR 5.201. Any proposals that are received shall be evaluated.

7. Actions to Increase Competition: The Government will continue to conduct market research to ascertain if there are changes in the market place that would enable future actions to be competed. Each year, prior to the exercise of any option periods, market research will also be conducted to ascertain whether a comparable, competitive software tool has been developed in the interim period.

8. Market Research: In April 2016, VA technical experts in the program office reviewed websites of similar vendors, Hewlett Packard (HP) and Microsoft. HP and Microsoft provide a comparable, enterprise search tool but cannot provide the specific functions/capabilities as delineated above in Section 5. No other brand name, other than Elsevier's Fingerprint Engine tool, are capable of employing the NIH RCDC framework. The RCDC category definitions used by NIH are not available through any other vendor and cannot be duplicated without using the proprietary Elsevier fingerprint engine technology. In addition, in May 2016, a request of information was posted to the Federal Business Opportunities Page to see if there were vendors capable of meeting the Government's requirements. The announcement closed and no responses were received.

9. Other Facts: None.